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BURKE'S ESSAY ON THE SUBLIME AND ITS REVIEWERS

Burke's *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* has often been reprinted, and almost always, since the second edition of January 10, 1759,¹ 'with an Introductory Discourse concerning Taste, and several other Additions.' A comparison with the original edition, published by Dodsley on April 21, 1757,² shows that most of the changes were merely verbal and of a minor sort; these casual differences Burke, in his second Preface, passes over in silence—and for the present we may follow his example. Nothing of importance is either deleted or rewritten. There are, however, considerable additions. The significant changes, then, consist of a new Preface, an introductory essay on taste, and, in the text proper, scattered additional passages in sum larger by half than the treatise on taste.

The original Preface recounts the manner in which the *Inquiry* came to be written; it briefly describes the common confusion of mind upon the subject-matter of the essay, and the author's method of inquiry:

He observed that the ideas of the sublime and beautiful were frequently confounded, and that both were indiscriminately applied to things greatly differing, and sometimes of natures directly opposite. Even Longinus, in his incomparable discourse upon a part of this subject, has comprehended things extremely repugnant to each other under one common name of the sublime. The abuse of the word beauty has been still more general, and attended with still worse consequences.

Such a confusion of ideas must certainly render all our reasonings upon subjects of this kind extremely inaccurate and inconclusive. Could this admit of any remedy, I imagined it could only be from a diligent examination of our passions in our own breasts, from a careful survey of the properties of things which we find by experience to influence those passions, and from a sober and attentive investigation of the laws of nature, by which those properties are capable of affecting the body and thus of exciting our passions.³

The second Preface is altogether new, both in phrase and in idea; it omits any account of the origin of the work, but mentions

¹ Ralph Straus, *Robert Dodsley, Poet, Publisher, and Playwright*, 1910, p. 367.

² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

³ *Inquiry*, 1757, pp. vi-vii.

the changes in the second edition, and discusses, this time more technically, the method of investigation and its uses:

In considering any complex matter, we ought to examine every distinct ingredient in the composition, one by one, and reduce everything to the utmost simplicity; since the condition of our nature binds us to a strict law and very narrow limits. We ought afterwards to re-examine the principles by the effect of the composition, as well as the composition by that of the principles. We ought to compare our subject with things of a similar nature, and even with things of a contrary nature; for discoveries may be and often are made by the contrast, which would escape us on the single view. . . . The use of such inquiries may be very considerable. Whatever turns the soul inward on itself tends to concentrate its forces and to fit it for greater and stronger flights of science.⁴

The more positive tone of the second Preface reflects the favor with which the first edition had been received. On August 10, 1757, Burke wrote to Shackleton, a former school-mate:

'This letter is accompanied by a little performance of mine, which I will not consider as ineffectual if it contributes to your amusement. It lay by me for a good while, and I at last ventured it out. It has not been ill received, so far as a matter on so abstracted a subject meets with readers.⁵

David Hume, indeed, in spite of his interest in literary and aesthetic questions, which in 1757 led him to publish a dissertation on taste, and another on tragedy,⁶ was not among the early readers; it was not until after the second edition that he mentioned to Adam Smith, in a letter of April 12, 1759, his acquaintance with "Burke, an Irish gentleman, who wrote lately a very pretty treatise on the sublime."⁷ That Burke's original edition was not ill-received may be seen from three contemporary reviews, by Arthur Murphy in Johnson's *Literary Magazine*,⁸ by an unknown writer in the *Critical Review*,⁹ and

⁴ *Inquiry*, 1761, pp. v, viii; *Works* 1.58, 60. (In this paper, I cite as *Works* the six-volume edition published in the *World's Classics Series* by the Oxford University Press, 1906.)

⁵ *Works and Correspondence of Burke*, 1852, 1.17.

⁶ In *Four Dissertations*.

⁷ Burton, *Life and Correspondence of Hume*, 2.55.

⁸ *Literary Magazine* 2.182-189 (1757). This review was ascribed by Thomas Davies to Samuel Johnson, and was inserted in the first edition of Johnson's works (1787; vol. 10) by Sir John Hawkins; but Boswell ascribed it to Murphy. It is not included in the edition of Johnson's works published in 1792 with an introduction by Murphy. (W. P. Courtney, *Bibliography of Samuel Johnson*, p. 77; Boswell's *Life*, ed. by G. B. Hill, 1.310.)

⁹ *Critical Review* 3.361-374 (April, 1757).

by Oliver Goldsmith in the *Monthly Review*.¹⁰ The *London Chronicle*¹¹ carried an account of the *Inquiry* which was spread over five issues, but Dodsley was its publisher, and the review largely consisted of quotations. Yet it is noteworthy that even Dodsley's reviewer did not subscribe to Burke's theory, and was struck, not so much by the soundness of the *Inquiry*, as by its "bold uncommon spirit" and its giving "criticism a face which we never saw it wear before."¹²

Murphy, the most severe of the three reviewers who attempted serious criticism, said:

Upon the whole, though we think the author of this piece mistaken in his fundamental principles, and also in his deductions from them, yet we must say we have read his book with pleasure. He has certainly employed much thinking; there are many ingenious and elegant remarks which, though they do not enforce or prove his first position, yet considering them detached from his system, they are new and just. And we cannot dismiss this article without recommending a perusal of the book to all our readers, as we think they will be recompensed by a great deal of sentiment, [and] perspicuous, elegant, and harmonious style, in many passages both sublime and beautiful.¹³

The unknown writer in the *Critical Review* remarked that on a subject so abstruse he could give, not a critique, but a short review of the work, proposing some doubts without impugning the theory,¹⁴ and heartily recommending the book as "a performance superior to the common level of literary productions as much as real ingenuity is superior to superficial petulance, and the fruit of mature study to the hasty produce of crude conjecture."¹⁵ Goldsmith, though he vigorously contested Burke's theory, was yet the most cordial of the three. His summary very largely borrowed Burke's phrasing, his objections he relegated to footnotes, and he said:

Our author thus, with all the sagacity so abstruse a subject requires, with all the learning necessary to illustration of his system, and with all the genius that can render disquisition pleasing—by proceeding on principles not sufficiently established, has been only agreeable when he might have been instruc-

¹⁰ *Monthly Review* 16.473-480 (May, 1757). The ascription to Goldsmith is found in Prior, *Life of Oliver Goldsmith*, 1837, pp. 226 ff.

¹¹ *London Chronicle* 1.556-8, 580-581, 595-596; 2.26-27, 50-53 (June 9-11, 16-18, 21-23; July 7-9, 14-16).

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.52.

¹³ *Literary Magazine* 2.189.

¹⁴ *Critical Review* 3.374.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.361.

tive. . . . If we have, in a very few instances, attempted to point out any mistake or oversight in this very agreeable author's principles, not a captious spirit of controversy, but concern for truth, was the motive; and the ingenious Inquirer, we are persuaded, is too much a philosopher to resent our sometimes taking a different course in pursuit of the game he has started.¹⁶

These notices, perhaps, together with the need for a new edition, encouraged Burke in his second Preface to omit the following remark in his first:

He now ventures to lay it before the public, proposing his notions as probable conjectures, not as things certain and indisputable.¹⁷

True, in the later Preface, Burke did allude to the possibility of errors in his work and even of failure, but he asserted also, perhaps a little impatiently:

A theory founded on experiment and not assumed, is always good for so much as it explains. Our inability to push it indefinitely is no argument at all against it.¹⁸

This last remark, with the rest of its paragraph, evidently was evoked by the critics, whose practice it was "to pass over both the premises and conclusion in silence, and to produce, as an objection, some poetical passage which does not seem easily accounted for upon the principles I endeavor to establish."¹⁹ This offense had been committed by all three reviewers, and in making the same point, that terror and pain are not the only sources of the sublime, nor sources of that alone.²⁰

In his second Preface, Burke gives no explanation for the introduction of the *Discourse on Taste* other than by saying:

It is a matter curious in itself, and it leads naturally enough to the principal inquiry.²¹

It is not within the design of this paper to discuss the origins of the *Discourse*; yet it may not be amiss to point out here that the year 1757 saw the appearance of Hume's *Dissertation on Taste*,²² and that of the seventh volume of the *Encyclopédie*, which contained the article *Goût*. This article, by Voltaire,

¹⁶ *Monthly Review* 16.473, 480.

¹⁷ *Inquiry*, 1757, p. viii.

¹⁸ *Inquiry*, 1761, p. vii; *Works* 1.59.

¹⁹ *Inquiry*, 1761, p. vi; *Works* 1.59.

²⁰ *Monthly Review* 16.475; *Critical Review* 3.363; *Literary Magazine* 2.183.

²¹ *Inquiry*, 1761, p. iii; *Works* 1.57.

²² In *Four Dissertations*.

Montesquieu, and D'Alembert, was later translated as an appendix to Gerard's *Essay on Taste*,²³ and Burke included a partial translation of Montesquieu's treatise in the first volume of the *Annual Register* (that for 1758). Gerard's essay was written in competition for the gold medal offered in 1756 by the Edinburgh Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture.²⁴ It would be interesting to know who were the unsuccessful competitors of Gerard.

The changes in the body of the work fully justify the words of Burke in the Preface to the second edition:

Though I have not found sufficient reason, or what appeared to me sufficient, for making any material changes in my theory, I have found it necessary in many places to explain, illustrate, and enforce it.²⁵

Virtually all the explanations and enforcements were called forth by the opinions expressed in the three reviews. The additions, then, represent Burke's side of a debate with his reviewers. It would hardly be profitable to try to discriminate finally and in every case the influence of each of these upon Burke's additions. For a number of changes, it is clear that more than one criticism is responsible. The most important suggestions—or, rather, occasions for rebuttal—concerning the first two parts, are Goldsmith's; he was aided chiefly by Murphy. The expansion of the sections on proportion in the third part was chiefly called forth by the objections of the writer in the *Critical Review*, as were also the few additions to the fourth part. Murphy's remarks brought the relatively large additions to the short final part on words. Save for the strictures of Goldsmith, Burke did not try to meet every objection.

We may first attend to the changes occasioned by the criticisms of Goldsmith. He first objects to Burke's distinction between positive pleasure and the feeling we experience upon the removal or moderation of pain, and thus states his objection:

Our author imagines that positive pleasure operates upon us by relaxing the nervous system, but that delight [on the removal of pain] acts in a quite contrary manner. Yet it is evident that a reprieve to a criminal often affects him with such pleasure that his whole frame is relaxed, and he faints away

²³ 1759.

²⁴ *Advertisement* prefixed to Gerard's *Essay*, 1759.

²⁵ *Inquiry*, 1761, p. iii; *Works* 1.57.

Here then a diminution of pain operates just as pleasure would have done, and we can see no reason why it may not be called pleasure.²⁶

This argument, which Murphy also advanced,²⁷ Burke meets with the remark:

It is most certain that every species of satisfaction or pleasure, how different soever in its manner of affecting, is of a positive nature in the mind of him who feels it. The affection is undoubtedly positive; but the cause may be, as in this case it certainly is, a sort of privation. And it is very reasonable that we should distinguish by some term two things so distinct in nature as a pleasure that is such simply, and without any relation, from that pleasure which cannot exist without a relation, and that too a relation to pain.²⁸

Goldsmith's next objection concerns a principal part of Burke's theory, namely that the ideas of pain and danger are the ultimate sources of the sublime, as the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling.

Our author, by assigning terror for the only source of the sublime, excludes love, admiration, etc. But to make the sublime an idea incompatible with those affections is what the general sense of mankind will be apt to contradict. It is certain we can have the most sublime ideas of the Deity without imagining him a God of terror. Whatever raises our esteem of an object described must be a powerful source of sublimity; and esteem is a passion nearly allied to love.²⁹

This last sentence drew from Burke the frequently quoted dictum that "love approaches much nearer to contempt than is commonly imagined."³⁰ Burke illustrates and enforces his original statement as to the relation of terror and sublimity with the words:

I am satisfied the ideas of pain are more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. Without all doubt, the torments which we may be made to suffer are much greater in their effect on the body and mind than any pleasures which the most learned voluptuary could suggest. . . . Nay, I am in great doubt whether any man could be found who would earn a life of the most perfect satisfaction, at the price of ending it in the torments which justice inflicted in a few hours on the late unfortunate regicide in France.³¹

To strengthen the argument by alluding to the regicide in France was natural enough if Burke was making his corrections

²⁶ *Monthly Review* 16.474-475.

²⁷ *Literary Magazine* 2.183.

²⁸ *Inquiry* 1.4; 1761, pp. 52-53; *Works* 1.88. The addition runs one sentence farther than the quotation above.

²⁹ *Monthly Review* 16.475.

³⁰ *Inquiry* 2.5; 1761, p. 116; *Works* 1.117.

³¹ *Inquiry* 1.7; 1761, p. 59; *Works* 1.91. The addition runs from the first sentence quoted to one after the last quoted.

shortly after the appearance of the three reviews. Murphy, indeed, had suggested it by the remark, left unanswered by Burke, that "the iron bed of Damiens [is] capable of exciting alarming ideas of terror, but cannot be said to hold anything of the sublime."³² Damiens unsuccessfully attempted the life of Louis XV on January 5, 1757, and after other tortures was put to death by *écartèlement* on March 28 of the same year.³³ The *Monthly Review* for May, 1757, referred to two lives of the regicide, but refused to review either, on the ground that "we have seen enough of Damiens already in the newspapers." A later number³⁴ gave a detailed account of the trial and the torture.

Goldsmith's sentence already quoted, alleging that we can have sublime ideas of the Deity without supposing him a god of terror, was by Burke made the occasion of part of another and eloquent addition, the section on power.³⁵ Burke held that to the human imagination, the power of the Deity is the most striking of his attributes. This view he supported with quotations from Horace, Lucretius, and the Scriptures. Thus the second half of the section on power (the whole appeared for the first time in the enlarged edition) finds its cause in the reviewer's allusion to the Deity. If reflection on the force of Goldsmith's remarks had not been sufficient to incite Burke to the account, in the first half of the inserted section, of the general idea of power as a cause of the sublime, a phrase in the *Critical Review* might well have done so:

We impute the idea of the sublime to the impression made on the fancy by an object that indicates power and greatness.³⁶

Still attacking Burke's fundamental separation of the sublime and the beautiful on the basis of pain and pleasure, Goldsmith had cited an instance in which painful and pleasant ideas are mingled:

When, after the horrors of a tempestuous night, the Poet hails us with a

³² *Literary Magazine* 2.183.

³³ *La Grande Encyclopédie*.

³⁴ *Monthly Review* 17.57.

³⁵ *Inquiry* 2.5. The addition of a whole section explains the two sections numbered 4 in this Part.

³⁶ *Critical Review* 3.369.

description of the beauties of the morning, we feel double enjoyment from the contrast. Our pleasure here must arise from the beautiful or the sublime.³⁷

Goldsmith had proceeded to overthrow his author's fundamental separation of the causes of these two on each hypothesis. The *Critical Review*, too, had more curtly refused to accept the division.³⁸ Accordingly, Burke took a hint from Murphy's remark³⁹ that "the sublime will exist with beauty," and said:

In the infinite variety of natural combinations, we must expect to find the qualities of things the most remote imaginable from each other united in the same object. . . . If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove that they are the same? Does it prove that they are any way allied? Does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory?⁴⁰

Goldsmith's next point of attack was Burke's view of the relation between indistinctness of imagery and sublimity. Burke's theory, that clearness is always detrimental to emotional effect, may have been among the opinions that led Arthur Murphy to say:

The love of novelty seems to have been a very leading principle in his mind throughout his whole composition; and we fear that in endeavoring to advance what was never said before him, he will find it his lot to have said what will not be adopted after him.⁴¹

Goldsmith refrained from a like censure, and even granted that obscurity sometimes produces the sublime, as indeed did Murphy also.⁴² Goldsmith merely said:

Distinctness of imagery has ever been held productive of the sublime. The more strongly the poet or orator impresses the picture he would describe upon his own mind, the more apt will he be to paint it on the imagination of his reader. Not that, like Ovid, he should be minute in description. . . . We only think the bold yet distinct strokes of a Virgil far surpass the equally bold yet confused ones of Lucan.⁴³

Burke did not attempt to deal with these arguments merely in the passage against which they were directed.⁴⁴ To this he added a paragraph in which he argued that a clear idea, being

³⁷ *Monthly Review* 16.475.

³⁸ *Critical Review* 3.366.

³⁹ *Literary Magazine* 2.188.

⁴⁰ *Inquiry* 3.27; 1761, pp. 238-9; *Works* 1.172-173. The addition runs from the first sentence quoted to the end of the section.

⁴¹ *Literary Magazine* 2.183.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.185.

⁴³ *Monthly Review* 16.477.

⁴⁴ *Inquiry* 2.[4]; 1761, pp. 107-110; *Works* 1.114-115. The addition is the last paragraph.

readily perceived, "is therefore another name for a little idea," and that painters, in picturing scenes of horror, had achieved only "odd, wild grotesques"; and he quoted the vision of Job as an instance of moving indistinctness. To the section on Magnificence,⁴⁵ Burke added an instance of numerous confused images in a passage from Shakespeare, and another from Ecclesiasticus; and to the section on Light⁴⁶ was added a quotation from Milton illustrating the "power of a well-managed darkness."

The paradoxical defense of obscurity may be thought to spring from Burke's preference for an idealistic to a realistic art, but one need only refer to his idea of imitation, expressed in the introduction,^{46a} to see that his was by no means an idealistic theory of art. Burke really derives his paradox on obscurity from a rhetorician's examination of the human passions, as is evident from Part V of the *Inquiry*. The limitations of Burke's theory are made clear by contrast with Reynolds' well-known papers in the *Idler*^{46b} published some months after Burke's enlarged edition. In these papers, it will be recalled, Reynolds prefers the Italian painters to the Dutch, because the Italians attend "only to the invariable, the great and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal nature; the Dutch . . . to literal truth and a minute exactness in the detail."^{46c} The opposition of the invariable idea, inherent in universal nature, to the accidental, is not parallel to Burke's opposition of the great or obscure to the little or clear. The extent of Reynolds' debt to Burke and Johnson has been disputed, but, in the passage here quoted, there need be no question: Reynolds owes his idea of the invariable to his friend Mudge,^{46d} who taught him Plato.^{46e}

⁴⁵ *Inquiry* 2.13; 1761, pp. 141-143; *Works* 1.128-129. The addition begins "There are also many descriptions" and runs to the end of the section.

⁴⁶ *Inquiry* 2.14; 1761, pp. 145-147; *Works* 1.130-131. The addition begins "Our great poet" and runs to the end of the section.

^{46a} *Inquiry*, 1761, pp. 15-16; *Works*, 1.72. *Inquiry* I. 16, which is formally on imitation, adds nothing to the definition.

^{46b} Nos. 76, 79, 82; Sept. 29, Oct. 20 and Nov. 10, 1759.

^{46c} No. 79.

^{46d} Northcote, *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, I. 113-115. Northcote relies on Burke's letter of 1797 to Malone.

^{46e} I owe to Professor H. S. V. Jones the suggestion of a comparison with Reynolds, as also the reference to Ruskin's interesting qualifications on Reynolds' opinion: *Modern Painters* 3.4.1, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, 5.20 ff.

Another objection of Goldsmith's was to Burke's account of beauty as the cause of love. In a passage⁴⁷ somewhat confused in its terms, the reviewer held that love, or a sense of beauty, is not always caused by the mere physical aspect of objects, but by our reasonings as to the fitness of their structure for our uses or for their own; and he cited friendship as a kind of love based rather on interest than on physical attraction. Murphy⁴⁸ agreed with Goldsmith, but the writer in the *Critical Review* approved Burke's rejection of utility as an element of beauty.⁴⁹ Burke strengthened his refutation of the argument that fitness is a cause of beauty, by adding⁵⁰ several instances of fit animals that yet are not considered beautiful, and defended his limitation of the term⁵¹ to "the merely sensible qualities of things" on the ground of "preserving the utmost simplicity" in a difficult and complex subject.

In his last note, Goldsmith brought his incomplete knowledge of medicine to bear on Burke's explanation of the manner in which darkness affects the eye. Burke, of course, consistently with his whole theory, held that darkness is terrible; and in Part IV, in which he explained the efficient—that is, the physical—causes of the sublime and of the beautiful, he had to show how darkness is painful to the eye. This he did by referring to the painful contraction of the radial fibres of the iris as the pupil dilates; and this painful contraction or tension he opposed to relaxation, which he called pleasant. Goldsmith said in objection:

The muscles of the uvea act in the contraction, but are relaxed in the dilatation of the ciliary circle. Therefore, when the pupil dilates, they are in a state of relaxation, and the relaxed state of a muscle is its state of rest. . . . Hence darkness is a state of rest to the visual organ, and consequently the obscurity which he justly remarks to be often a cause of the sublime, can affect the sensory by no painful impression; so that the sublime is often caused by a relaxation of the muscles as well as by a tension.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Monthly Review* 16.476.

⁴⁸ *Literary Magazine* 2.187.

⁴⁹ *Critical Review* 3.367.

⁵⁰ *Inquiry* 3.6; 1761, pp. 193-195; *Works* 1.152-153. The addition begins 'I need say little on the trunk of the elephant' and ends 'not very different from men and beasts.'

⁵¹ *Inquiry* 3.1; 1761, pp. 162-163; *Works* 1.138-139. The new matter includes all save the first three sentences of the section.

⁵² *Monthly Review* 16.480.

Burke strengthened his original position by showing that the antagonist muscles, the radial fibres of the iris, are forcibly drawn back by the relaxation of the iris; and he alluded to the common experience of pain in trying to see in a dark place.⁵³

Forster in his life of Goldsmith has thus described the article in the *Monthly Review*:

His criticism was elaborate and well-studied; he objected to many parts of the theory, and especially to the materialism on which it founded the connection of objects of pleasure with a necessary relaxation of the nerves; but these objections, discreet and thoroughly considered, gave strength as well as relish to its praise, and Burke spoke to many of his friends of the pleasure it had given him.⁵⁴

The critical part of this description is not more correct than the last statement is substantiated. The review itself was avowedly a bundle of extracts, the criticism was contained in but five footnotes, and Goldsmith's chief objection was not to the author's materialism, but to his strict division of the sublime and beautiful on the basis of pain and pleasure; all his comments on the relation of pleasure and relaxation are to this end.

Goldsmith had ranged with Burke over a wide field of fact and deduction, but not without leaving much unsaid. The writer in the *Critical Review* directed his objections chiefly to the relation of proportion and beauty. Murphy had dismissed Burke's reasons for not considering proportion a cause of beauty by referring to the authorities, "Hutchinson and others," saying at the same time that the "gradual variation"⁵⁵ Burke found beautiful was simply another name for proportion. This comment of Murphy drew from Burke an allusion to Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* which requires explanation. Burke's words are:

It gives me no small pleasure to find that I can strengthen my theory in this point [that gradual variation is necessary to beauty] by the opinion of the very ingenious Mr. Hogarth, whose idea of the line of beauty I take in general to be extremely just. . . . I must add, too, that, . . . though the varied line is that alone in which complete beauty is found, yet there is no particular line which is always found in the most completely beautiful.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Inquiry* 4.16; 1761, pp. 279-280; *Works* 1.191. The addition constitutes sentences 5-7 of the section.

⁵⁴ Forster, *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. 1871, 1.107.

⁵⁵ *Literary Magazine* 2.187.

⁵⁶ *Inquiry* 3.15; 1761, pp. 216-217; *Works* 1.163. The addition comprises the last six sentences of the section.

This addition suggests either that Burke, though he finished his work in 1753, did not come upon Hogarth's book, which was published in December, 1753,⁵⁷ until his own first edition had appeared; or else that he made no changes in the writing during the four years in which it lay by him; the latter supposition is strengthened by Burke's own statement in his first Preface:

It is four years now since this inquiry was finished, during which time the author found no cause to make any material alteration in his theory.⁵⁸

It is unlikely that Burke, in his extended refutation⁵⁹ of the arguments for proportion and fitness as causes of beauty, was glancing at Hogarth, as Bosanquet⁶⁰ asserts. There is little in Hogarth's confused work that could be taken for the set of ideas Burke was opposing. It is true that in one passage⁶¹ Burke seems to notice a view held by Hogarth⁶² that our judgment of beauty depends upon an intuitive perception of the fitness of the observed proportion for use; but much of Burke's attack on proportion and fitness is found in the first edition, and at the time of writing this, Burke, as we see, probably did not know the *Analysis*. The principal advocates of proportion and fitness were writers who had been longer known and better received than Hogarth. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson had developed the idea of a "sense of beauty" that responds to perceived proportions. Shaftesbury and Bishop Berkeley had, with varying emphasis, united proportion, fitness, and beauty.⁶³

The passage on fitness, inserted in the second edition, has already been accounted for in the discussion of Goldsmith's influence on Burke. The additions on proportion can be attributed in part to Murphy's curt insistence⁶⁴ that "a beautiful and entire whole never existed without proportion," and

⁵⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography* 27.89.

⁵⁸ *Inquiry*, 1757, p. vii.

⁵⁹ *Inquiry* 3.1-8.

⁶⁰ *History of Aesthetic*, 1917, p. 208.

⁶¹ *Inquiry* 3.6; 1761, p. 191 ff.; *Works* 1.151 ff.

⁶² *Analysis of Beauty*, ch. 11.

⁶³ Shaftesbury, *Miscellaneous Reflections* 3.2; *Moralists* 2.4. Hutcheson, *Inquiry concerning Beauty, Order, Harmony, and Design* 1.12; 2.7, 8, 10, 11. Berkeley, *Alciphron* 3.8, 9.

⁶⁴ *Literary Magazine* 2.187.

chiefly to the longer argument in the *Critical Review*,⁶⁵ which laid great stress on a general range of proportions in each type of beauty, and asserted that "proportion is symmetry." The vague ideas of proportion held by his critics led Burke to insert two pages⁶⁶ on its definition and his method of reasoning about it. Proportion he defined to be the measure of relative quantity. He demanded of his opponents demonstrative proof that in every type of beautiful object there is a fixed quantitative relation of parts. He himself in subsequent passages undertook to show the absence of such a relation. With one exception, these passages are not new; the single change is the argument from the different proportions of the sexes in the same species.⁶⁷ It is of interest that Burke's refusal to reduce beauty to definite ratios won Ruskin's cordial assent in *Modern Painters*.⁶⁸

The declaration in the *Critical Review*,⁶⁹ that "the well-proportioned parts of the human body are constantly found beautiful," Burke met with the challenge:

You may assign any proportions you please to every part of the human body, and I undertake that a painter shall religiously observe them all, and notwithstanding produce, if he please, a very ugly figure.⁷⁰

Burke now turned to the broader meaning, suggested in the words already quoted from the *Critical Review*, of proportion as a common form of a species within which individuals vary considerably.⁷¹ The confusion of beauty and proportion taken as the common form he found to be due to this, that beauty was commonly opposed to deformity. Burke rightly held that the opposite of beauty is ugliness, not deformity, and he streng-

⁶⁵ *Critical Review* 3.366-367.

⁶⁶ *Inquiry* 3.2; 1761, pp. 164-168; *Works* 1.139-141. The addition begins 'what proportion is' and ends 'whilst we inquire in the first place.'

⁶⁷ *Inquiry* 3.4; 1761, pp. 177-179; *Works* 1.145-146. The addition so far as here in point begins 'Let us rest a moment on this point' and covers six sentences.

⁶⁸ *Modern Painters* 3.1.6; ed. by Cook and Wedderburn, 4.109.

⁶⁹ *Critical Review* 3.367.

⁷⁰ *Inquiry* 3.4; 1761, p. 176; *Works* 1.144-145. The addition is one of three sentences, beginning 'You may assign any proportions.'

⁷¹ *Inquiry* 3.4; 1761, pp. 179-186; *Works* 1.146-149. The addition here in question is the rest of the section after the matter mentioned in note 67.

thened his case⁷² against the common or customary form by repeating the argument of the first section of the *Inquiry*. In this he had held that novelty is necessary to beauty, and that custom soon stales all beauty.

Except for the long section on Power, the new matter on proportion and fitness constitutes the most considerable of the additions to the *Inquiry* proper.

The *Critical Review* joined Goldsmith in the attack on Burke's central position, that the sublime is caused by a mode of pain, as some tension or labor of the physical organism, or by ideas associated with pain, and that pleasure is caused by a relaxation of the nerves or by related ideas. Goldsmith's citation of a mixed instance has been mentioned. The *Critical Review*⁷³ suggested that the pleasures of love might be considered "an exertion of the nerves to a tension that borders upon pain." Since this would be an instance, if admitted, of positive pleasure derived from a relation to pain, it would break down the fundamental distinction. Burke, therefore, struck out of his definition of love, "desire or lust, which is an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, but by means altogether different."⁷⁴ But this arbitrary exclusion did not satisfy him; in the section on the physical cause of love, accordingly, he added both an appeal to the general experience of mankind, and an admission that partial exceptions might occur:

Who is a stranger to that manner of expression so common in all times and in all countries, of being softened, relaxed, enervated, dissolved, melted away by pleasure? The universal voice of mankind, faithful to their feelings, concurs in affirming this uniform and general effect; and although some odd and particular instance may perhaps be found, wherein there appears a considerable degree of positive pleasure, without all the characters of relaxation, we must not therefore reject the conclusion we had drawn from a concurrence of many experiments; but we must still retain it, subjoining the exceptions which may occur according to the judicious rule laid down by Sir Isaac Newton in the third book of his *Optics*.⁷⁵

⁷² *Inquiry* 3.5; 1761, pp. 187-188, 189-190; *Works* 1.150, 150-151. Three sentences beginning 'Indeed beauty is so far'; and five sentences beginning 'Indeed, so far are use and habit.'

⁷³ *Critical Review* 3.369.

⁷⁴ *Inquiry* 3.1; 1761, p. 162; *Works* 1.138.

⁷⁵ *Inquiry* 4.19; 1761, p. 288; *Works* 1.195.

To Part IV, which, it will be remembered, deals with the efficient or physical causes of the sublime and the beautiful, two other small additions were evoked by the *Critical Review*.

We likewise conceive he is mistaken in his theory, when he affirms that the rays falling on the eye, if they frequently vary their nature, now to blue, now to red, and so on . . . produce a sort of relaxation or rest to the organ, which prevents that tension or labor allied to pain, the cause of the sublime. Such a quick and abrupt succession of contrasted colors and shapes, will demand a quick succession of changes in the . . . eye, which, instead of relaxing and refreshing, harass the organ into the most painful exertions.⁷⁶

Burke replied⁷⁷ by contrasting "the different effects of some strong exercise and some little piddling action." The reviewer's second objection was to Burke's classifying sweet things with those that are smooth and relaxing; he held instead "that sweet things act by stimulation, upon the taste as well as upon the smell."⁷⁸ The author's rejoinder was an appeal to the custom of languages: in Latin, French, and Italian, "soft and sweet have but one name."⁷⁹

The effect of Murphy's criticisms, in so far as they did not coincide with those of the other two reviewers, is easily traced. His speculation,⁸⁰ that "astonishment is perhaps that state of the soul, when the powers of the mind are suspended with wonder," rather than with horror, drove Burke to defend his own theory by instancing the use of several languages.⁸¹ Murphy's argument⁸² against Burke's idea that words affect the emotions without raising images in the mind, led to two long additions, the first of which shows Burke at his best, illustrating his argument by apt quotation and comment. The reviewer's argument had been:

On hearing any of these words [virtue, honor, cited by Burke], a man may not instantly have in view all the ideas that are combined in the complex one

⁷⁶ *Critical Review* 3.369.

⁷⁷ *Inquiry* 4.10; 1761, pp. 262-263; *Works* 1.183. The addition is the third sentence of the section.

⁷⁸ *Critical Review* 3.370.

⁷⁹ *Inquiry* 4.22; 1761, p. 296; *Works* 1.199. The addition in this section comprises sentences 3-5.

⁸⁰ *Literary Magazine* 2.185.

⁸¹ *Inquiry* 2.2; 1761, pp. 97-98; *Works* 1.109. The addition comprises the last seven sentences of the section.

⁸² *Literary Magazine* 2.188.

. . . but he may have the general idea . . . and that is enough for the poet's purpose.

Burke's reply began:

Indeed, so little does poetry depend for its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy if this were the necessary result of a description. Because that union of affecting words, which is the most powerful of all poetical instruments, would frequently lose its force along with its propriety and consistency, if the sensible images were always excited.⁸³

Citations from Virgil, Homer, and Lucretius are brought to illustrate the confusion of images by which poets affect the passions. The second addition in this part is a passage distinguishing a clear from a strong expression. It is directed against a statement of Murphy's:

He who is most picturesque and clearest in his imagery, is ever styled the best poet, because from such a one we see things clearer, and of course we feel more intensely. It is a disposition to feel the force of words, and to combine the ideas annexed to them with quickness, that shows one man's imagination to be better than another's.

The distinction between clearness and force which Burke made here, he had already stated quite definitely in a different context and even in the first edition.⁸⁴

But still it will be difficult to conceive how words can move the passions which belong to real objects without representing these objects clearly. This is difficult to us, because we do not sufficiently distinguish, in our observations upon language, between a clear expression and a strong expression. These are frequently confounded with each other, though they are in reality extremely different. The former regards the understanding, the latter belongs to the passions. The one describes a thing as it is, the latter describes it as it is felt.⁸⁵

Here we may conclude the account of Burke's alterations so far as they were inspired by objections to his thought. A word may be said of Burke's use of Biblical quotations in illustration or enforcement of his ideas. Except for a brief reference to the phrase "the angel of the Lord,"⁸⁶ all the passages from the

⁸³ *Inquiry* 5.5; 1761, pp. 328-332; *Works* 1.213-215. The addition begins with the sentences quoted and runs to the end of the section.

⁸⁴ *Inquiry* 2.4, *Of the difference between Clearness and Obscurity with regard to the Passions*.

⁸⁵ *Inquiry* 5.7; 1761, pp. 338-341; *Works* 1.218-219. The addition runs from 'if they may properly be called ideas' to the end of the paragraph.

⁸⁶ *Inquiry* 5.7; 1761, p. 336; *Works* 1.217.

Bible appear for the first time in the enlarged edition. All are adduced as examples of the sublime. With two exceptions, all appear in the section on Power.⁸⁷ One passage is drawn from Ecclesiasticus; all the others come either from Job or from the Psalms. It is probable that two papers by Joseph Warton in the *Adventurer*⁸⁸ inspired these additions. Warton's essays are in the form of a newly-discovered letter from Longinus in praise of the Hebrew writings, and include, among others, passages from the Psalms and from Job, though none of those used by Burke.

The collation of the two editions has then shown that no changes in structure or substance were made by Burke; that in point of style he was sensitive to the turn of a sentence, and quite willing to alter details of expression; and that he was so keenly sensitive to the public reception of his work as to regard almost every objection raised against him as a challenge to defend his position.

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⁸⁷ The exceptions are the vision of Job, *Inquiry* 2.[4], last paragraph, and the panegyric of Simon from Ecclesiasticus, *Inquiry* 2.13.

⁸⁸ *Adventurer* Nos. 51, 57. The statement as to Warton's authorship is found in a note to the final essay of the series.